

On Attaining the Settled Mind

Anjin ketsujō shō

PART II

TRANSLATED BY DENNIS HIROTA

[Beings of Nembutsu]

The *Treatise on the Pure Land* states:¹

The beings of Amida Tathāgata's pure blossom
Are born transformed from that blossom of perfect
enlightenment.

¹ The contents of *Anjin ketsujō shō* 安心決定鈔 are traditionally summarized as explanations of three scriptural passages and four topics. The three passages are from *Hymns of Birth* (taken up in Part I), *Treatise on the Pure Land* and *Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy* (treated in the body of Part II). The four topics are considered at the conclusion of the work; three are analogies illustrating facets of its basic theme, the oneness of practitioner and Dharma (Amida's Vow and Buddhahood).

The quotation is from *Jōdoron* 淨土論, attributed to Vasubandhu (c. 320–400), T26, 231a. In the original gatha, these lines based on the Larger Sutra describe the beings born in the Pure Land. *Anjin ketsujō shō*, following T'an-luan's commentary on the *Treatise on the Pure Land*, takes the blossom to refer specifically to the lotus-throne on which Amida sits, a manifestation of his enlightenment, and the "beings of the Tathāgata's pure blossom" to refer to people of the nembutsu in this world also.

Further, *Anjin ketsujō shō* develops the image of the lotus of Amida's enlightenment, stating that the "beings of the pure blossom" are those who have been pervaded by Amida's mind. In this way, it unfolds two themes emphasized in the Seizan school: that Amida's virtues manifest themselves in the acts of beings who have entrusted themselves to the Vow, and that in fact Amida's Vow and practice have penetrated beings' existence from the moment of perfect enlightenment in the infinite past, so that to return to that moment by taking refuge in the Vow is to be born from the blossom of

Those who have attained the mind of great entrusting, which is itself Other Power,² are here referred to as “beings of the pure blossom.” They are all alike “born from the blossom of perfect enlightenment.”

Concerning the “blossom of perfect enlightenment”: Dharmākara Bodhisattva, staking his Buddhahood on beings’ attainment of birth, vowed not to realize enlightenment if they were not to be born into his Pure Land. Then, on fulfilling the aspiration and practice (*gan-gyō*) for all the beings throughout the universe, he achieved the perfect enlightenment in which practitioner and Dharma are one. The mind of compassion thus attained has manifested itself as the lotus blossom of mind, referred to here as the “blossom of perfect enlightenment.” In the seventh contemplation, this blossom is taught as “the Dharma that frees beings from pain and affliction,”³ and in the passage on the practitioner of the lowest grade and rank, as “the lotus blossom that appears in welcome before the being who has committed the five damning acts.”⁴ Amida’s mind is likened to the lotus blossom because it is

perfect enlightenment. In Shin writings, to be born transformed from the blossom refers to birth in the Pure Land at death.

² *Tariki no daishinjin* 他力の大信心. This term may also be interpreted simply as the “mind of great trust in Other Power.” Other Power, however, is a central term in both the Shin and Seizan schools. Shinran frequently uses similar expressions and states, “Other Power is entrusting yourself to the Eighteenth [Vow]” (see Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought* [Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989], 224–226). Here, entrusting as Other Power expresses Shinran’s concept of shinjin as given or directed to beings (*ekō*) by Amida. From a Seizan perspective, the relationship between a person’s trust and Other Power might be understood on the basis of *ki-hō ittai* instead; the mind that takes refuge (*kimyō*) enters into and becomes (or has been from the first) nondual with Amida’s Buddhahood or enlightenment.

³ From the *Contemplation Sutra*, T12, 342c. Śākyamuni tells Vaidehī that he will teach her a “way (*hō*, dharma) to eliminate pain and affliction,” and proceeds to explain how to see Amida and his attendant bodhisattvas, beginning, in the seventh contemplation, with Amida’s lotus-throne (*kezakan*, 華座觀).

⁴ From the *Contemplation Sutra*, T12, 346a: “At the time of death, such people see a golden lotus flower like the sun approach and appear before them, and in an instant, they immediately attain birth in the world of ultimate bliss, within the lotus flower.” The Seizan master Ken’i (Fukakusa branch) also explicitly relates, though with a more extreme interpretation, the images centering on the lotus blossom: “This flower is the flower fulfilled through the Primal Vow; hence, it is the Dharma-reality (*hottai*) that is the ‘way by which pain and affliction are eliminated’. . . . This lotus flower is the pure

enlightenment undefiled by the mud and filth of foolish beings' blind passions.

Why are the beings [all] born from the lotus blossom of the Buddha's mind? T'an-luan states in his commentary on these lines:

Because they are the same in practicing the nembutsu and follow no other way.

He continues:

This extends even to this world, so that all nembutsu practitioners within the four seas are brothers and sisters.⁵

In terms of good and evil, practitioners are individually distinguished as belonging to one of nine grades; but in entrusting themselves to the Vow and practice (*gan-gyō*) that are Other Power and all alike taking refuge in the reality of perfect enlightenment, there are no differences among them. Thus it is said, "Because they are the same in practicing the nembutsu and follow no other way."

Further, those born in the Pure Land first are born having taken refuge in the Vow and practice that are Other Power, and those born later all attain birth having taken refuge in the one thought-moment of perfect enlightenment. Because they all enter the lotus blossom of [Amida's] mind, it is said that "[all nembutsu practitioners] within the four seas are brothers and sisters."

"Those who see the Buddha's body see the Buddha's mind. The Buddha's mind is great compassion."⁶ The Buddha's mind turning compassionate thoughts to us has steeped and dyed us to the marrow of our bones. This is like fire having taken flame in charcoal; you may seek to separate [fire from charcoal], but it cannot be done. The light that is the Buddha's mind grasping beings illumines us, penetrating our bodies to the very quick. There is nothing of our minds—including even the three poisons and all blind passions—that is not thoroughly

lotus flower of mind that is self-nature within the breasts of all sentient beings" (*Mandara kikigaki* 曼荼羅聞書, quoted in Okumura Gen'yū, *Anjin ketsujō shō, jōdo e no michi*, p. 188).

⁵ From *Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land* (*Ōjōronchū*, 往生論註), T40, 838b.

⁶ Loosely quoted from the *Contemplation Sutra* passage teaching the ninth contemplation on the true Buddha-body (T12, 343c).

imbued with the Buddha's virtues. Practicer and Dharma existing as one from the very beginning is expressed "Namu-amida-butsu."

Once this mind of entrusting has arisen, though we may—in terms of verbal activity—say the nembutsu only from time to time, we are nevertheless sentient beings of constant nembutsu. In the passage on the three relationships, Shan-tao speaks of "always [saying the Name] with the lips . . . always [worshiping Amida] with the body," with this meaning.⁷ Because we entrust ourselves to the virtues of the Buddha's three modes of action, our own activity—bodily, verbal, and mental—is one with Amida's Buddha-wisdom, and the virtues of Amida's long sustained practice manifest themselves in our acts.

In China there was a venerable master named Fu who achieved a remarkable realization of the Mahāyāna and who was also well-versed in non-Buddhist scriptures.⁸ Among his sayings is the following:

Together with Buddha I rise morning after morning; clasping
Buddha I lie down night after night.⁹

Although "Buddha" here refers to ultimate reality or suchness as taught in the general Dharma-gate of the Path of Sages, there is nothing at all to prevent us from considering it from the perspective of [Amida's] practice and realization. If we come to be illumined and protected by the light of Amida's mind, which grasps beings, we are like Master Fu. Morning after morning we rise bearing the virtues of the fulfilled Buddha, and night after night we lie down together with Amida's Buddha-wisdom.

The unrelated Buddhas being far distant from us, what can we do to receive their virtues? And although the true reality of suchness or Dharma-nature is near, unenlightened beings like ourselves are powerless to attain it. While having long possessed in our very existence the Vow and practice of Other Power, which do not require any capability or insight on our part, we have meaninglessly remained fettered by the

⁷ See Part I, footnote 21.

⁸ Master Fu (傅大士, 497–569). Layman of the Liang and Ch'en dynasties, said to have gained sudden awakening on seeing his reflection in a river.

⁹ Paraphrase of the *Record of Master Fu* (*Fu-daishi roku*, 傅大士錄): "Night after night I sleep embracing Buddha; morning after morning I rise together [with Buddha]. Walking and standing, we watch over and accompany each other; sitting and reclining, we both remain still. We do not part from each other a hair's breadth."

attachments of self-power, so that we return in vain to our old village of samsaric life. This is truly lamentable!

How full of pity is Śākyamuni at the uselessness of his eight thousand times going from and returning to this world called Sahā! How sorrowed is Amida by the futility of guiding those so difficult to guide! If even a single one of us entrusts himself or herself to this Vow and practice that surpass conceptual understanding, that is indeed to respond in gratitude to the Buddhas' benevolence.

Hence, it is stated in *Passages on the Land of Peace and Bliss*:

The path in which we are to entrust ourselves to Other Power exists already. Do not desire to involve yourself fatuously in self-power and vainly remain in this burning house!¹⁰

This is unquestionable.

[The necessity of] reforming our mistaken attachments to self-power and entrusting ourselves to Other Power is expressed [by Shan-tao]:

We must strive to overturn our ignorance and return to our original home!¹¹

Also:

Let us return! Do not abide in this homeland of māras!¹²

[Nembutsu as Uncreated]

Further, it is stated in *Hymns of the Nembutsu Liturgy*:

The Land of Bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated;
It is surely hard to gain birth there by doing miscellaneous
good acts, guided by our conditions.

Hence, the Tathāgata selected the essential Dharma,
Instructing beings to say Amida's Name with singleness,
again singleness.¹³

This passage states that since the Land of Bliss is the realm uncreated

¹⁰ Loosely quoted from *Anrakushū*, 安樂集.

¹¹ *Hymns of Birth*, (*Ōjōraisan*, 往生礼讃).

¹² "On Meditative Practice," *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, T37, 263a.

¹³ *Hōjisan*, 法事讃, T47, 433b.

and undefiled, it is certainly hard to attain birth there through miscellaneous good acts that are karmically conditioned and defiled. It is by taking refuge in the uncreated, undefiled nembutsu-samādhi that we can be born into the uncreated and eternal fulfilled land.

First, “miscellaneous good acts [that we do] guided by our conditions” refers to practices of self-power. They are rejected thus because we perform such good acts drawn by their accessibility and led by our capacities and circumstances. We assume, for example—without genuinely understanding the Buddha-Dharma or awakening trust—that since an acquaintance of ours is a monk of the Ritsu school, precepts are the most precious teaching in the world, or that because we perform mantras as petitions for benefit in the present life, they will also be of use in forming bonds with the teaching and so are invaluable. If we take such a view, is not even our practice of nembutsu—being nembutsu of self-power—the equivalent of miscellaneous good acts that we do, guided by our conditions?

People commonly think that the nembutsu is a matter of mentally contemplating the features of the Pure Land and Amida Buddha or vocally saying the Name, and that when we are not contemplating or reciting, there is no nembutsu. If such were the case, we could hardly speak of the uncreated and eternal nembutsu. If it appeared when we said it and vanished when we did not, the nembutsu would truly be ephemeral and constantly changing.

“Uncreated” (*mui*, 無為) is written with characters meaning “no [karmic] activity.” In the Hīnayāna tradition, three kinds of uncreatedness are taught. Among these is the uncreated as empty space. This means that empty space neither vanishes nor emerges for the first time; it is a natural principle. Further, in the Mahāyāna tradition, the eternal, unchanging reality of suchness or Dharma-nature is spoken of as uncreated.

Thus, in the preface to *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, Shan-tao states, “Dharma-body is eternal, like empty space,” expressing the Pure Land’s benefit of transcendence of time.¹⁴ The statement that the Land of Bliss is the uncreated and eternal¹⁵ realm means,

¹⁴ From the prefatory section (*jodaimon*, 序題門) of “On the Essential Meaning,” *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*. T37, 247a.

¹⁵ Uncreated and eternal (*mui jōjū*, 無為常住). I follow the *Shinshū hōyō bon* text; other texts read “uncreatedly abiding” (*mui jū* 無為住).

therefore, that it neither vanishes nor emerges through the acts of foolish beings. Nembutsu-samādhi is precisely thus. It does not emerge for the first time when a sentient being thinks on [the Buddha] or disappear because it has been forgotten. We must well understand this truth.

In general, nembutsu means to think on (*nen*) Buddha (*butsu*). The Buddha has established the basis on which, through the karmic power of the great Vow, the fetters that bind sentient beings to samsaric existence are cut and they are able to be born into the fulfilled land of non-retrogression. When, thinking on those virtues of Buddha, we allow ourselves to be carried by the Primal Vow with [our minds] taking refuge, then our bodily, verbal, and mental acts rest on Amida's Buddhahood and rise to the fruition of the perfect enlightenment of Buddha. Know then, concerning this nembutsu-samādhi, that although we say the Name, worship, and think on the Buddha, these are not practices of the self; they are simply the practicing of Amida Buddha's practice.

"Vow" [in the phrase "karmic power of the great Vow"] is the Primal Vow arising from five kalpas of thought and reflection; "karmic power" refers to the acts of practice performed [by Dharmākara Bodhisattva] for millions of years and vast kalpas, as well as the myriad virtues of Buddhahood manifested since the attainment of perfect enlightenment ten kalpas ago. The virtues of this Vow and practice were engaged in wholly for the sake of us—the unenlightened beings of the evil world in future ages—and were undertaken in our stead; and when the bonds to samsaric existence were completely severed for each sentient being throughout the universe and the aspiration and practice for [their birth into] the fulfilled land of non-retrogression were perfectly accomplished, the Buddha attained the enlightenment in which practitioner and Dharma are one. Thinking on the essential nature of this perfect enlightenment is termed nembutsu-samādhi; hence, there is no reason whatever that it should remain a matter of the practitioner's bodily, verbal, or mental acts.

Ordinarily, it is we who must strive to perform the disciplines that will sever the bonds of samsaric existence and who must exert efforts in the aspiration and practice that will enable us to enter the fulfilled land. The distinctive universal Vow, however, transcends the principle that "executing the cause leads to receiving the result"; thus, when we take refuge in it, realizing with profound gratitude and joy that the Buddha

has wholly prepared and accomplished the birth of foolish beings through the karmic power of the great Vow, then our bodily, verbal, and mental acts become effecting agents and are carried from beneath, while the power of Amida's Vow becomes that which is enacted and turns into the vehicle on which we are born into the fulfilled land of the fulfilled Buddha. Thus when, with mind taking refuge, we have boarded the Primal Vow, our bodily, verbal, and mental acts are all borne by Amida's Buddhahood. The Buddha's Vow and practice are none other than this. They are wholly the substance of the aspiration and practice fulfilling our birth; hence, no practice leading to birth need be discussed other than the perfect enlightenment of Amida's Buddhahood.

When we disregard the Buddha's perfect enlightenment as something public and not our own—even while listening to this truth—and seek to attain birth by somehow awakening aspiration for enlightenment and diligently performing practice, we manifest a deplorable self-attachment. Since Amida's perfect enlightenment is the reality that brings about sentient beings' birth, that Buddhahood itself embodies our aspiration for birth and our practice. This practice does not depend on whether or not sentient beings are mindful. Thus, no practice for birth is discussed other than the perfect enlightenment of Amida's Buddhahood.

To apprehend this enlightenment in one's heart is termed the threefold mind or the mind of trust. Because this perfect enlightenment in which practitioner and Dharma are one harbors in itself the nonduality of Name and Buddhahood, expressing it verbally is "Namu-amida-butsu." Hence, entrusting ourselves to the Vow in our hearts returns to the one thought-moment of perfect enlightenment, and expressing it with our lips returns to the one thought-moment of perfect enlightenment. Even if we say the Name a thousand times, we cannot depart from the one thought-moment of perfect enlightenment. Further, when we are indolent and do not feel inclined [to say the Name], we may pass nights and days without performing the nembutsu or thinking on the Buddha. Nevertheless, once our minds entrusting ourselves to Other Power have come to be carried by the Primal Vow, we realize that the Name is itself uncreated and eternal, for Amida's Buddhahood is in essence practice free of any lapsing or interruption, being none

other than the embodiment of practice sustained for expanses of time. It is said, “Amida-butsu is the practice,” with this meaning.¹⁶

Further, it was stated, concerning the nembutsu-samādhi just explained, that although we say the Name, worship, and think on the Buddha, these are not practices of the self; they are simply the practicing of Amida Buddha’s practice. This means that when we, with the mind taking refuge, allow ourselves to be carried by the Primal Vow, and our bodily, verbal, and mental acts all ride upon the reality of Amida’s Buddhahood, then the body is no longer an existence separated from Amida, the mind is no longer a mind separated from Amida. Saying the Name aloud, we verbally express our deep gratitude for the perfect enlightenment in which practitioner and Dharma are one, and paying homage [with our bodies], we venerate the joy that we experience at the compassionate virtue of Other Power, a joy that floods our existence. Hence, although we worship, and although we say the Name, these acts do not arise through the efforts of the practitioner; they are simply the enacting of that which has been fulfilled in Amida Buddha’s accomplishment of the practice of foolish beings.

Amida’s Buddhahood is uncreated and undefiled. The two forms of fulfillment—[Buddha-land and Buddha-body]—are uncreated and undefiled. Thus, because of the nonduality of Name and Buddhahood, the Name also is uncreated and undefiled. For this reason, we are told to change and enter utterly into nembutsu-samādhi, to do it singly and further to become single-hearted in it. The word “single” is used twice. First, it means to abandon miscellaneous practices and take up right practice. Next, it means to put aside the auxiliary acts and enter completely into the act of true settlement; this is the meaning of the second usage.¹⁷ In addition, the first “singleness” refers to one practice, the

¹⁶ See Part I, note 11.

¹⁷ An interpretation based on Hōnen’s *Passages on the Nembutsu Selected in the Primal Vow* (*Senjakushū*, 選択集) T83, 18c: “If you desire to enter the Pure Land way, of the two methods of practice, right and miscellaneous, cast aside all miscellaneous practices and choosing, take the right practice (i.e., sutra-chanting, contemplation, worship, nembutsu-utterance, and offerings focusing on Amida). If you desire to perform the right practice, of the two kinds of acts, true and auxiliary, further put aside the auxiliary (right practices other than vocal nembutsu) and choosing, solely perform the act of true settlement (i.e., saying the nembutsu).”

second, to oneness of mind.¹⁸ Entering into and becoming utterly the one practice and one mind is expressed, “with singleness, again singleness.”

The essential nature of this act of true settlement is not nembutsu as belonging to the three modes of the practitioner’s activity. Length of time is irrelevant; whether one is walking, standing, sitting, or reclining is of no concern. The Buddhahood grasping and never abandoning us is itself the act by which the birth of foolish beings is truly settled; hence, the Name—since Amida’s Name and Buddhahood are nondual—is the act of true settlement. To enter utterly into and become Namu-amida-butsu, in which practitioner and Dharma are one, is nembutsu-samādhī. For this reason, whether or not the practitioner is mindful is immaterial; since the oneness of practitioner and Dharma is fulfilled through the Buddha’s unhindered wisdom, the Name itself is uncreated and undefiled. This is expressed, “the Land of Bliss is . . . the uncreated.”

It is not a practitioner’s intellection that is the essence of nembutsu-samādhī, but rather the mindfulness that the Buddha’s great compassion has grasped sentient beings. The Buddha’s virtues, from the very beginning, have been fulfilled within the existence of sentient beings, in the oneness of practitioner and Dharma; hence, we do not take refuge for the first time with the emergence of the mind taking refuge. Rather, the virtues fulfilled in the oneness of practitioner and Dharma arise and manifest themselves in the mental activity of sentient beings. Saying Namu-amida-butsu likewise is not a matter of approaching the reality of Amida Buddha through utterance; the virtues of the perfect enlightenment in which practitioner and Dharma are one express themselves thus in the verbal activity of sentient beings. When we entrust ourselves, we return to the Buddha-reality; when we say the Name, we return to the Buddha-reality.

On Self-Power and Other Power: [the Analogy of] the Sun

Seeking to attain birth through self-power is like trying to see things on a dark night through the power of our own eyes; it is altogether im-

¹⁸ This second interpretation of the two usages of “single” (専) is also found in Shinran, *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’: A Translation of Yuishinshō mon’i*, Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1979, p. 45.

possible. By receiving the sun's light with our eyes, we see the object of perception illumined. This comes about wholly through the power of the sun. Nevertheless, even with the active cause of the sun's illumination, a person born blind is incapable of sight. Further, even with the necessary condition of our eyes' being receptive, on a dark night we cannot see. We see when cause and condition, sun and eye, conjoin harmoniously.

Similarly, we achieve the great matter of birth by receiving the virtues of the Primal Vow in the thought-moment of taking refuge in it. The mind taking refuge is like the eye, the light grasping us is like the sun. "Namu," being the taking of refuge, is the eye. "Amida-butsu" is the Dharma-reality embodying the universal Vow of Other Power; it is the sun. Accordingly, in the six characters [of Namu-amida-butsu] when the practitioner whose past good acts have matured takes refuge with "Namu" and utters "Amida-butsu," a myriad practices and a myriad good acts, and virtues countless as the sands of the Ganges, are all fulfilled with simply one utterance; this is to receive the virtues of the Primal Vow. Do not, then, seek virtues and roots of good elsewhere.

On the Four Kinds of Birth

There are four kinds of birth in the Pure Land [classified by states of mind at the time of death].¹⁹

The first is birth while in a state of right-mindedness.²⁰ Regarding it, the *Amida Sutra* teaches, "The person, at the time of death, will be of uninverted mind and will immediately attain birth."²¹

The second is birth while in a state of delirium.²² The *Contemplation Sutra* teaches, concerning the lowest grade [of practitioner]:

¹⁹ *Shishu ōjō* 四種往生.

²⁰ *Shōnen ōjō*, 正念往生.

²¹ *Amida kyo* 阿弥陀經 (T12, 347b). The preceding passage reads: "If there is a good man or good woman who hears the Name of Amida Buddha being taught and holds that Name steadfast, whether for one day . . . or seven days, with singleness of mind free of confusion, then when that person faces the end of life, Amida Buddha, along with a host of the saintly, will manifest himself before him. The person, at the time of death, will be of mind uninverted and will immediately attain birth."

²² *Kyōran ōjō*, 狂乱往生.

At the time of death, persons who commit the ten transgressions, who break precepts, or who commit the five damning acts at first fall into delirium and seize the empty air with their hands; white sweat flows from their bodies and the furious flames of hell rise before them. But they encounter a good friend, and through but a single utterance, or a single thought, or ten utterances, they attain birth [in the Pure Land].²³

The third is birth while in an indeterminate state of mind.²⁴ This is seen in *Response to Various Questions Concerning the Pure Land Teaching*.²⁵ Prior to lapsing into an indeterminate state of mind, a person has been illumined by the light that grasps and has awakened the mind of trust that takes refuge [in Amida]. Since he has been born into samsaric existence, however, through some karmic cause that brings it about, his mind has fallen into an indeterminate state. Nevertheless, his birth in the Pure Land is beyond doubt, for he is drawn by the Buddha-wisdom that is Other Power.

To give an analogy, the moon's light shines on us even though we may be asleep. Similarly, though we may decline into an indeterminate

²³ Loosely based on the passages of the sixteenth contemplation describing the three ranks of practitioner in the lowest of three general grades. Those of the highest rank commit the ten transgressions, those of the middle rank break precepts, and those of the lowest rank commit the five damning acts. All, at the end of their lives, encounter a good friend who teaches them the nembutsu. The sutra states that the fires of hell appear before the person of the middle rank, but Shan-tao states that all three ranks see the features of hell; further, he states that those of the highest rank perspire white sweat and grope the air (*Hymns on the Samādhi of All Buddhas' Presence*, [Hanjuan, 般舟讚]). Further, the sutra is interpreted as stating that persons of the highest rank say Namu-amida-butsu once, those of the middle rank hear the teaching and awaken aspiration, and those of the lowest rank utter the Name ten times.

²⁴ *Muki ōjō*, 無記往生. "Indeterminate," meaning ascertainable neither as good or evil, refers here to such states of mind as the semi-consciousness of illness or disorientation of old age.

²⁵ *Shaku jodo gungiron*, 釈浄土群疑論 by Huai-kan (j. Ekan, 懷感), a T'ang dynasty disciple of Shan-tao: "After performing good, a person passes many days without yet dying. He does not again commit grave evil, but at times gives rise to the various indeterminate states of mind. These states of mind cannot bring on either good or evil recompense; hence, being carried by the prior performance of nembutsu, he will attain birth."

mental state, the light that grasps us never ceases; hence, we are born into the Pure Land through the power of the light, even though we may be in an indeterminate mental state. The person ignorant of the reality of cause and effect may be critical, asking why Amida, with the Buddha's power, does not clear away even the slightest degree of indeterminateness, or may think that as long as one becomes indeterminate one cannot be born. This thinking arises from not knowing the sacred teachings in detail, from being ignorant of the truth of cause and effect, and from doubting the inconceivable working of the Buddha's wisdom.

The fourth is birth with aspiration in one's heart.²⁶ This is seen in the *Dharma-Drum Sutra*, which states that even without saying the Name aloud, by thinking [on the Pure Land] in one's mind one attains birth.²⁷

This [categorization of] four kinds of birth has been ascertained by the holy man of Kurodani, Hōnen.²⁸ It is common for people to lack a detailed knowledge of it, however, and to believe that if one fails to say the nembutsu at the time of death, or lapses into an indeterminate state of mind, one will not be born in the Pure Land, and further, that if one indeed says the Name, one is born. Such an understanding, though perhaps not altogether groundless, is nevertheless quite rough.

Five hundred sons of a wealthy man recited the Buddha's name at the time of their death but did not attain birth in the Pure Land.²⁹ In

²⁶ *Inen ōjō*, 意念往生.

²⁷ *Dharma-Drum Sutra* (*Hokku kyō*, 法鼓經), as quoted in *Passages on the Land of Happiness* (*Anrakushū*): "When a person at the time of death—even if incapable of thinking [on the Buddha]—simply realizes that the Buddha is in the West and awakens aspiration for birth, he attains birth."

²⁸ This concept of four kinds of birth cannot be found in Hōnen's writings. A simple listing is included, however, in *Collection Showing the Way to the West* (*Saihō shinan shō*, 西方指南抄), Shinran's compilation of Hōnen's writings and records relating to him: "The four kinds of birth: 1. birth through nembutsu while in a state of right-mindedness (expounded in the *Amida Sutra*); 2. birth through nembutsu while in a state of delirium (expounded in the *Contemplation Sutra*); 3. birth with an indeterminate mind (expounded in *Response to Various Questions Concerning the Pure Land Teaching* by Huai-kan); 4. birth with aspiration in one's heart (expounded in the *Dharma-Drum Sutra*)" (T83, 896a).

²⁹ Based on the *Ocean of Buddha-Contemplation Samādhi Sutra* (*Kanbutsu zammai*

the same way, according to the *Sutra of Protection for the Country*, although we say the Name aloud at the moment of death, if we do not awaken the entrusting mind that takes refuge [in the Vow], we will be born [into samsaric existence again] as a human being or a deva.³⁰ We see, then, that if people of the four types [of birth] described above, just as they are, simply awaken the mind taking refuge, they will all attain birth. In Bodhisattva Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land* are the words, "I take refuge in the Tathāgata of Unhindered Light Filling the Universe," [expressing the centrality of taking refuge].

It is possible to understand this profound teaching through a simple analogy. Suppose the sun to be Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.³¹ New-born children may receive Avalokiteśvara's light with their eyes, but while in infancy they do not realize it. As they grow slightly cognizant, they assume that the light is their own power, the light of their eyes. But someone who knows the significance of the sun explains, "If it were the light of your own eyes, you would be able to see at night. Quickly turn your trust instead to the primal light of the sun!" For those who turn to the light of the sun in the heavens, the light of their own eyes immediately becomes the light of Avalokiteśvara.

Such is the meaning of taking refuge (*kimyō*, "turning to life"). Our life when we are unaware is still the life of Amida; nevertheless, in infancy we are ignorant of this. When we have become slightly aware and exert our powers, we think our life is our own. Then, listening to a

kai kyō, 觀仏三昧海經), which states that the sons recited the name of the Buddha and thereby attain birth in the heavens of the four deva-kings.

³⁰ Based on the *Dhāraṇī Sutra of Protection for the Ruler of the Country* (*Shugo kokkai shu darani kyō*, 守護国界主陀羅尼經).

³¹ Based on the *Sutra of the Four Continents surrounding Sumeru* (須弥四域經, *Shumi shūiki kyō*), quoted in *Passages on the Land of Happiness* (*Anrakushū*): "When heaven and earth first unfolded, there was no sun, moon, or stars. Though devas descended, they had only their aureoles for light. Human beings suffered greatly. Then Amida Buddha sent two bodhisattvas, one named Treasure-Response and the other Treasure-Happiness."

Shinran also notes this passage: "A sutra states that Avalokiteśvara, with the name Bodhisattva Treasure-Response, reveals himself as the god of the sun and dispels the pitch darkness of ignorance in all beings; and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, with the name Bodhisattva Treasure-Happiness, reveals himself as the god of the moon and illuminates the long night of birth-and-death. Together they bring forth wisdom in all beings" (*Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*, p. 32).

good friend who teaches us to turn to the primal life of Amida, we take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, and thereby come to apprehend in trust that our life is itself none other than Immeasurable Life. Thus, to take refuge is further explained as “attaining right-mindedness.”³²

Those who have once taken refuge [in the Vow] and attained right-mindedness may later fall into an indeterminate state of mind, for their karmic bonds are heavy,³³ but they will nevertheless attain birth. We find it stated already in *Response to Various Questions Concerning the Pure Land Teaching* that even with the mind indeterminate, a person is born; this means that since one has been illumined by the light that grasps, the indeterminate mind ceases and with a mind of joy, one attains birth.

In addition, the *Contemplation Sutra* teaches concerning those of the three lowest ranks that while they have yet to take refuge [in the Vow], the features of hell appear before them and they are cast into terror and delirium. But if, urged by a good friend, they take refuge, they will attain birth.

Moreover, those who have taken refuge in ordinary times receive the benefit of being grasped while they are carrying on their lives; hence, at the time of death also their minds are not inverted and they attain birth. This is called birth while in a state of right-mindedness.

Finally, once you have awakened the mind of entrusting that takes refuge [in the Vow], then as seen in the *Dharma-Drum Sutra*, though your life may end without your having said the nembutsu aloud, you will attain birth. This is called birth with aspiration in one's heart.

Thus, since the mind of entrusting that is the inconceivable working of Other Power has been definitely settled in one way or another, the person should have no doubts about birth.

³² *Hymns of Birth*, T47, 429a: “When people continue utterance on utterance of Amida's Name to the very end of their lives, then if there are ten people, ten will be born; if one hundred, one hundred will be born. This is because, there being no obstructing conditions, they attain right-mindedness.”

³³ “Karmic bonds” (*kase* 枷, shackles) may be interpreted “[common] cold” (*kaze* 風邪) instead. Thus, the passage may be read: One may later fall into an indeterminate state of mind, because, for example, of a severe cold [and fever]. . . .

[The Parable of Hidden Gold]

The *Buddha-Contemplation Samādhi Sutra* states:

There was a wealthy man who had one daughter. In his final disposition of his property, he gave her jambūnada gold. She wrapped it in a filthy cloth and buried it in mud. The king of the land sent retainers to confiscate the gold. Though they stepped in the mud, they did not realize it was hidden there and returned [empty-handed]. Afterwards, the daughter retrieved the gold and used it in trade, so that it increased to even greater worth than before.³⁴

This is a parable. The “king of the land” stands for our own mind-king, the “treasure” for good acts, and the “retainers” for the six thieves—our senses and consciousness. To be bereft of all means of support, our good acts seized by the six thieves, is an analogy for lacking any condition for emancipation. Retrieving the gold from the mud and its worth working freely represents the mind of entrusting becoming definitely settled through nembutsu-samādhi, so that we swiftly attain birth in the Land of Happiness. Wrapping the gold in filthy rags and placing it in the mud presents an analogy indicating that the true practitioner [in accord with the Vow] is the foolish being of the five defilements, the woman of defilement and evil.

[The Analogy of Fire and Firewood]

Once flame has been set to firewood, it cannot be separated from it. The firewood represents our hearts and minds; the flame, Amida’s light grasping and never abandoning us. Since we are illumined and protected by the light of the Buddha’s mind, there is no Buddha-mind apart from our own minds, and no hearts and minds of our own apart from the Buddha’s mind. It is this that is named “Namu-amida-butsu.”

³⁴ Based on the *Ocean of Buddha-Contemplation Samādhi Sutra*, fascicle 10.